

February 22 Making a Comeback Congressman Fights to Bring Back Birthday

A Virginian serving in the United States House of Representatives has introduced a bill in Congress that returns the national holiday known as Presidents' Day to George Washington's Birthday. Equally important, he sees no reason that the holiday should not always be celebrated on February 22, Washington's real birthday, instead of the third Monday in February.

And despite the fact that congressmen have their hands full with a long list of financial problems, the idea of returning George Washington's Birthday is generating some traction.

As Capitol Hill journalist Paul Bedard correctly pointed out, "It's been 40 years since Congress created Presidents' Day and what do we have to show for it? For most, it's a three-day weekend in February to ski in the mountains, tan at the beaches, or shop the malls for huge savings. Missing? Any mention of who the original holiday was created for way back in 1879."

Congressman Frank Wolf, a huge fan of American history, is starting to enlist co-sponsors for the legislation, in the House and the Senate, from both sides of the aisle. He has also involved Mount Vernon and top Washington scholars, who have

offered to help in the effort.

"Today many states, the media, advertisers, and the general public have abandoned recognition of Washington's birthday and replaced it with a commercial shopping holiday that leaves American history and patriotism by the side of the road," says James Rees, president of Mount Vernon. "The holiday was far more meaningful when it revolved around George Washington, and schools were able to focus on his sterling example of character and leadership."

Author, journalist, and television producer Richard Brookhiser is among the most vocal. "Washington has become disconnected from his own birthday," he wrote to Wolf. "Celebrating it on the most convenient Monday, and calling it by the lazy shortcut 'Presidents' Day,' creates the impression that it honors everyone who made it to the White House."

Representative Wolf has long expressed that Washington's role in the nation's founding is a critical part of every American's education. But traditional American history is receiving less attention in the classroom, and being virtually eliminated in the everyday lives of many American families.